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District 6 Tip of the Fall Season:

Now is the time to be thinking about combining fishing with your upcoming deer, squirrel, or waterfowl hunting trip. The west-central part of West Virginia offers a variety of opportunities for this combination.

D6 Navigable Rivers:

White and Hybrid Striped Bass fishing is good around tailwaters during this time of year. Water temperatures are moving back into the preferred range of these species. Large minnow imitations are popular this time of the year, mimicking bait at the end of the growing season. Topwater is very effective in the early fall, but it will become less effective as water temperatures cool into winter.

Walleye and Sauger are becoming more active, and many make a migration to the tailwater areas in the fall. Anglers should also focus on tributary confluences and large drop-offs. A jig tipped with a minnow or curly tail grub is hard to beat, even in murky water. Anglers hoping to land a Walleye or Sauger should focus their efforts at low light time periods during sunrise or sunset.

Catfish are actively feeding before winter. Simple bottom fishing rigs are effective as ever. Flathead Catfish are active hunters, and live or fresh bait is by far the most productive when targeting them. Live bait also works well for Channel and Blue Catfish, but these species are more prone to hitting chicken liver and cut bait than Flatheads. Circle hooks set themselves, greatly reducing the chance of gut-hooking a fish, and circle hooks in sizes 4/0 through 7/0 are an excellent choice for catfish. Larger hooks should be used when targeting larger fish. Look for catfish below tailwaters areas, at stream confluences, and in outside bends. Keep in mind that as waters cool, fish will spend less time in high current areas.

D6 Rivers/Streams:

Muskellunge fishing heats up as water temperatures cool down. Muskies feed heavily before waters drop to winter temperatures, and large baits are popular among anglers during this time. Bucktails and crankbaits can be useful for covering large areas of water to efficiently locate active fish. Many true trophy fish are caught during the fall. The Little Kanawha River, the Hughes River system (including North and South Forks), Middle Island Creek, Mill Creek, and Sandy Creek are all good bets in district 6.

Smallmouth Bass are also active during the fall months. Anglers hoping to land a nice smallmouth should focus on the upper reaches of the Little Kanawha River and Hughes River systems. Jerk baits, tubes, and football-headed jigs tipped with soft plastics are good places to start. Focus on hitting areas with structure near flowing water.

D6 Impoundments:

Largemouth Bass fishing will begin to pick up in area impoundments as the water temperatures start to drop during the early part of fall. Fast moving reaction baits (crankbaits, spinnerbaits, etc.) are recommended during this time period. However, water temperatures will begin to get too cold for Largemouth Bass during the latter parts of fall as temperatures drop into the 50's and below. As temperatures cool, anglers should move towards baits that allow for a slower presentation.

Unweighted worms and other soft plastics are a good place to start. Warm days during the cooler parts of fall are an excellent time to get out on the water because many outdoorsmen are spending their days in the woods pursuing game. Anglers can have more room to work heavily pressured structure on commonly crowded impoundments on warm fall days. Good locations include North Bend Lake (Ritchie) and Elk Fork, O'Brien, Rollins, and Woodrum Lakes located in Jackson County.

Mountwood Lake (Wood), North Bend Lake (Ritchie), and Woodrum Lake (Jackson) offer potential angling opportunities for **Muskellunge**. Anglers targeting Muskellunge at North Bend Lake should be aware that there is a 40-inch minimum size limit on Muskies. Fall time means hungry fish, and large lures fished near woody cover, points, and tributary mouths may draw strikes from fish fattening up for the cold winter months. A tracking study on North Bend found that the majority of tagged Muskies spent the early portion of fall in the lower part of the lake. However, an upstream migration occurred in October.